

MONTGOMERY, ALA.
JOURNAL

E. 25,528

MAY 13 1966

STATINTL

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For Services Rendered

THE NAME of Francis Gary Powers, whose U-2 crashed in Russia five years ago, now seems like something out of an old history book.

The international uproar, the acute embarrassment of the Central Intelligence Agency and the way President Eisenhower fumbled the case are now as dusty as the Korean germ warfare charges.

Thus it was surprising to learn that just recently Powers was awarded a secret medal at a secret CIA ceremony. The word wasn't supposed to get out. The fact that it did indicates CIA still has problems keeping things hush-hush.

Powers isn't supposed to talk about the medal, the exact purpose of which is unknown. He's not supposed to wear it. It's thus a non-decoration for services rendered or something — possibly even for breaking up the Paris summit meeting conference which collapsed in the wake of the U-2 story. Maybe the CIA had some reason, also secret, to want the conference ended. In 1962, the CIA

grilled Powers for getting caught, specifically interested in why he had not disintegrated his plane as instructed. Maybe they have now decided his failure to destroy the craft was, for some covert reason, useful to the service.

All this cloak and dagger decoration ceremony became even odder with the almost simultaneous announcement by Russia that Col. Abel, the Soviet master spy who was swapped in a prisoner exchange for Powers, had also been decorated for his dirty work in this country. Heretofore, the Soviet Union refused even to admit it had spies: now they're being touted as heroes.

Could these two medals indicate an agreement between this country and Russia to evaluate the status and prestige of spies for reasons of mutual benefit? If so, we'll soon learn about it: nobody seems to be able to keep a secret anymore. Maybe the business will become respectable, with spies from every country joining together in an Espionage Benevolent Association.